

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 DRC-01 /116 W
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R 092024Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8521

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 2535

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT

SUBJ: PINOCHET'S RELATIONS WITH THE JUNTA

1. SUMMARY. HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE OF ACTIVITIES OF JUNTA
PRESIDENT GEN AUGUSTO PINOCHET HAS GIVEN RISE TO SPECULATION
THAT HE MIGHT BE SEEKING TO STRENGTHEN HIS OWN HAND AT EXPENSE OF
HIS JUNTA COLLEAGUES. WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS CASE.
WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT JUNTA OPERATES ON CONSENSUS BASIS
AND IS A RELATIVELY COHESIVE BODY IN WHICH NO ONE MEMBER PRE-
DOMINATES. END SUMMARY.

2. JUNTA PRESIDENT AUGUSTO PINOCHET HAS RECENTLY BEEN IN THE
PUBLIC EYE EVEN MORE THAN USUAL. PROMINENT PRESS AND OTHER
MEDIA ATTENTION HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO HIS VISIT THIS WEEK TO PRO-
VINCES OF MALLECO, CONCEPCION, AND BIO BIO, HIS PREVIOUS TRIP TO
CAUTIN, VALDIVIA, AND OSORNO PROVINCES, HIS MAY 1 ADDRESS,
AND HIS VISITS TO SMALL WORKER-CONTROLLED FIRMS IN
SANTIAGO. HIS PROVINCIAL JUNTAS HAVE INCLUDED A FULL RETINUE
OF CABINET MINISTERS AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES, AND HE HAS CON-
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DUCTED HIGHLY PUBLICIZED PUBLIC MEETINGS WITH WOMENS' GROUPS,

COAL MINERS, FARMERS, AND OTHER INTEREST GROUPS.

3. 3. THIS ACTIVITY HAS GIVEN RISE TO SOTTO VOCE SPECULATION THAT PINOCHET MAY BE "CAMPAIGNING" IN THE STYLE OF A CLASSIC CHILEAN POLITICIAN. CERTAINLY THERE IS ENOUGH OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT HE MAY BE BUILDING A PERSONAL IMAGE WHICH WILL PUT HIM IN THE LIMELIGHT TO AN EXTENT NOT SHARED BY THE OTHER THREE MEMBERS OF THE JUNTA. IT IS A MATTER FOR SPECULATION HERE WHETHER THIS SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A PRELUDE TO SOME MODIFICATION OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM UNDER WHICH THE JUNTA FUNCTIONS AS A COLLEGIAL BODY, WITH THE PRESIDENT AS ONLY "FIRST AMONG EQUALS."

4. WE THINK IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO JUMP TO SUCH A CONCLUSION. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN HEARD RECENTLY ABOUT THE DATE ON WHICH THE PRESIDENCY WOULD ROTATE TO ANOTHER JUNTA MEMBER, THE JUNTA STILL CONTINUES TO TAKE ALL IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT DECISIONS ON THE BASIS OF CONSENSUS. JUNTA CONTINUES TO MEET ALMOST DAILY FOR THIS PURPOSE. OTHER JUNTA MEMBERS ALSO MAKE TRIPS TO PROVINCES TO DEMONSTRATE GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN LOCAL PROBLEMS AND RALLY SUPPORT FOR REGIME, THOUGH WITH LESS EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY. ALL WE CAN SAY AT THIS JUNCTURE IS THAT IF GENERAL PINOCHET SHOULD WANT A PLATFORM FROM WHICH TO ASSUME GREATER PERSONAL STATUS, HE MIGHT ACT IN PRECISELY THE WAY HE HAS BEEN ACTING -- BUT WE REPEAT, WE CANNOT AT THIS TIME MAKE SUCH AN ASSUMPTION.
POPPER

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